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ABSTRACT

This document describes in depth a reading and writing project implemented at the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade levels at a public school in Portland, Oregon. The objectives of the Title I project--to improve students' reading and writing skills and to evaluate that improvement--are outlined, and each component of the program is described in detail. The series of holistic activities in the program includes the use of diaries, independent individualized reading, reading conferences, language lessons, proofreading and rewriting, and listening comprehension. Tests used to evaluate students' progress and their results are discussed for each project objective. The project results are then summarized, and 12 recommendations are given for projects similar to this one based on observations. (HTH)

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Read, Write, and Spell Every Day
The Mt. Tabor Title I Reading and Writing Project

Colin Dunkeld and Pat Engle

I. Background

Mt. Tabor School is a Portland public school in east Portland at 5800 S.E. Ash. It serves a mixed residential area ranging from very low to high-middle socio-economic levels. Occupations range from unskilled laborer to members of the professions and middle-management executives. Many children attending the school are from low-income families, and the school is therefore eligible for federal assistance from E.S.E.A. Title I funds to provide help for its low-achieving students.

The school is in transition from an elementary school to a middle school and has an enrollment of 430 students in grades 2 through 8. It has a faculty of 25. Grades 2 through 5 are organized as self-contained home rooms. Grade 6 works as a team staffed by five teachers, and grades 7 and 8 operate from home rooms with ability grouping in reading and mathematics. There is a talented and gifted program for the top 3% of the students, and special provision is made for emotionally and mentally handicapped students.

The Title I program consists of one teacher for reading and writing skills, a teacher's aide for basic mathematics skills, a part-time general aide, and a full-time counsellor. The students are selected for Title I classes by means of the Portland Public Schools' annual testing program. Results are reported as Portland scores, or P-scores, in reading, language, and mathematics at each grade level on a scale from 30 to 70 with a median of 50. Students with a P-score of 42 or lower, with teacher recommendation and parental approval, are scheduled for Title I assistance.

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For the 1978-79 school year, 60 students in grades 6, 7, and 8, were scheduled for daily work with the Title I reading and writing teacher in six small groups for periods of forty-five minutes as follows:

Period 1	7th grade	9 students
Period 2	7th grade	7 students
Period 3	6th grade	12 students
Period 4	8th grade	10 students
Period 5	8th grade	12 students
Period 6	6th grade	10 students

These classes participated in an innovative program; Read, Write, and Spell Every Day, which is the subject of this report. The program consists of individualized reading, daily journal writing, spelling, and group skill practices based on observed needs. It is an eclectic program which has its origins in the work of Veatch (1966 and 1968), Fader (1978 and 1976), Clegg (1969), Burrows (1965), and Moffett and Wagner (1976). The program has taken shape over a number of years in Corrective Reading courses at Portland State University and in cooperative staff development programs between Portland State University and Portland Public Schools. The project at Mt. Tabor was planned and implemented by the Title I reading and writing teacher, Patricia Engle. She has taught for two years, has a master's degree in education from the University of Oregon and is completing an Oregon Basic Reading Endorsement at Portland State University. Colin Dunkeld, professor of education at Portland State University, served as a consultant and assisted in the development of the project.

II. Description of the Program

A. Rationale

Reading and writing are complex processes. They have been subjected to endless study and analysis. As children perform holistic reading and writing tasks, such as reading a whole story or a whole book, or writing a complete message, theorists have attempted to reduce this complexity by identifying and isolating subskills and theorizing about their relationships to the completed

tasks. As a result, reductionist activities, or subskill practices, have taken more and more of a place in schools to help children towards the mastery of the holistic activities, which are the long-term goals of the curriculum.

Reading and writing curricula therefore differ in respect to whether they begin with holistic or reductionist activities, whether they evaluate the wholes or the parts of children's performance, and in the proportions of holistic and reductionist activities they contain. Holistic tasks of appropriate difficulty promise to be intrinsically satisfying to students and to resemble the long-term goals of reading and writing more closely than reductionist activities. On the other hand, at times, their complexity causes difficulties for some children, and they are unlikely to be attempted without error. Reductionist activities of appropriate difficulty frequently do not resemble the eventual goals of the curriculum in any way and may not always be perceived as useful by the child. Additionally, they need a period of application if transfer to the holistic task is to take place. On the other hand they often simplify the children's task and, if properly constructed and presented, have motivational properties of their own for some students because they offer a greater chance of success.

The Read, Write, and Spell Every Day program at Mt. Tabor begins with holistic activities in reading and writing in the belief that for low-achieving students particularly, these are the most necessary experiences for the school to provide. The program makes use of systematic and continuous teacher observation of children's performance of holistic tasks, and it prescribes reductionist activities or subskill practices, only when needed. In practice therefore children spend proportionately more time on the holistic than on the reductionist tasks. The program demands a knowledgeable, observant, and resourceful teacher; careful preparation, skillful presentation, and the positive acceptance of children's work. It promises to be economical of

teacher time, to keep record-keeping to a useful minimum, and to allow the teacher to teach.

B. Objectives

The objectives of the project were:

1. To improve the student's performance in reading and writing.
2. To design, implement and evaluate a program of holistic activities in reading and writing.
3. To observe children's progress and diagnose instructional needs.
4. To design, or locate, appropriate reductionist activities to teach diagnosed needs when required.

C. Development of the Project

Each child was given a personal file cover and a supply of writing paper. Books of various levels were arranged and displayed in the classroom and made accessible to students. The collection of books included:

Pal Paperbakcs, Xerox
World of Adventure Series, Benefic Press
Deep Sea Adventure Series, Field Enterprises
A number of assorted trade books
For example: Little House on the Prairie (entire series)
Sounder
Ribsy
A Wrinkle in Time

A routine was established as follows:

1. Diaries As the students entered the room, they picked up their own personal files, went to their desks, and wrote diaries. In the early part of the year much help was given until the students were able and willing to write diaries independently. Suitable topics were suggested and discussed before being written. Some key words were spelled and written on the blackboard. From the beginning the students were encouraged to attempt the spelling of every word they needed and were not penalized or criticized for logical but incorrect attempts. The teacher circulated and responded primarily to the content of the diaries. Much encouragement was given. Student's honest efforts were accepted.

Occasional suggestions were made about handwriting, spelling, format, and the general appearance of the work, but the emphasis was always upon what the children had to say and how they said it. Occasionally, to increase fluency, the students wrote "derbies" - timed written passages in which they wrote as much as they could write in two, three, four, or five minute periods.

2. Independent, Individualized Reading When they had finished their diaries, the students took out their reading books and read independently or chose to read with partners or in small groups. Children were shown how to choose books at appropriate levels of difficulty, or, if they had difficulty making up their minds or made poor choices, the teacher chose books for them. The teacher prepared and distribited to each child a dittoed Daily Reading Record. As each child selected a new book, he entered the name of the book on the reading record and each day entered the pages read and a brief comment. As a child read or finished a book, he was asked to choose some method for sharing what he had read. He could draw a picture, write a summary, or invent some way to show what he had learned and understood from the book. Throughout the year, the teacher circulated, heard children read, helped them with their reading records and helped them choose ways to share their books.

3. Reading Conferences The teacher systematically called each child in turn for a brief reading conference. At the conference the child described his book, showed the teacher his reading record and plans for sharing, and on request read a passage aloud. The teacher observed and evaluated the child's oral reading and comprehension, kept a record of each child's progress, and made a note about observed instructional needs. Some instruction in comprehension was also given at these conferences.

4. Language Lessons From her observations of student's diary writing, reading records, and other written work, the teacher selected instructional priorities for the whole calss, for small groups, and for individuals. In the

early part of the year, spelling was an almost daily priority for the entire class. Later, as the fluency of children's writing improved, sentence construction became a priority. Having assessed her priorities, the teacher prepared language lessons using wherever possible the examples of student's work which had indicated the need. For example, noticing the frequent misspelling of words with ed endings, the teacher prepared oral and written lessons on ed endings using examples from student's diaries, ask-asked, help-helped, play-played, etc. Or, the teacher selected, anonymously, one or two examples of run-on sentences from student's work and wrote them on the board. Teacher and class then discussed alternative ways of constructing and punctuating the sentences. During the process, terms such as noun, verb, subject, and predicate, were used and explained as needed. To teach structural analysis, the longer or harder words from the reading books were listed on the board. The class or group discussed the structure of the words and the meanings of the roots and affixes. The terms prefix, suffix, root, and inflection were used, and the meanings of common affixes were discussed. Towards the end of the year the teacher taught several lessons on dictionary skills and used some commercially prepared worksheets.

If the daily observations of children's work showed that the skills had not been learned or were not being transferred, the same, or similar lessons were presented again. Language lessons of this kind were scheduled for some members of the class almost every day. If the lessons began to take up a lot of the independent reading time, and to interfere with the continuity of student's reading, they were put aside for a day or two and used on more opportune occasions. During the year, language lessons were taught on the following topics:

Ways of sharing books, sentence arrangement, contractions, common homonyms, uses of comma, uses of apostrophe, handwriting, compound sentences, complex sentences, plurals, past-tense syllables, run-on sentences, sentence fragments, sentence expansion, sentence combining, observation of detail, dictionary symbols, stress patterns

in words, the setting of stories, making inferences about character, acrostics, rhyming couplets, diamente

5. Proofreading, Editing, and Rewriting Periodically two or three days were set aside for each student to select one of his diaries and to proofread it, edit it, and rewrite a corrected version. For the proofreading sessions, the class worked in pairs or in small groups reading to each other and helping others edit and make corrections. The teacher controlled each session by directing student's attention to one topic at a time, for example: spelling, capitalization, sentence sense, and sentence variety. After each proofreading session, the students were asked to rewrite their corrected drafts in a good, legible hand.

Proofreading, editing, and rewriting are difficult and often unwelcome activities. In January, after some routine editing and rewriting of diaries without any particularly compelling purpose, the students were asked to select some of their best work or to write on a new topic and were shown how to make a hand-sewn book, bound in boards. Most students chose a new, and in some cases, an extensive topic. The construction of the books themselves was completed in two periods but the writing, proofreading, editing, rewriting, and illustrating occupied a period of several weeks. During this time, the class continued its work in individualized reading, reading conferences, and language lessons, but the work on the books temporarily took the place of daily diaries.

6. Listening Comprehension

The teacher set aside times for reading aloud to the class. Readings were made from:

The Teacher's Read Aloud Anthology (Scott-Foresman, 1971)

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble, Old Yeller,

The School That I'd Like, Children's Voices from the Ghetto and several other books and stories for children.

The need to complete other work of an assumed higher priority limited the time available and the frequency with which this could be done.

The readings were made to provide good worthwhile topics for listening comprehension and class discussion, and to provide models for different kinds and styles of writing.

The six activities woven together into the routine described above, gave the students well-defined responsibilities and plenty of opportunities for initiative and originality in sustained reading and writing tasks on topics and of a duration somewhat of their own choice. The students received continuous evaluation of their work by the teacher and were given help and practice individually and in small groups according to their needs.

III. Evaluation

Objectives

The objectives of the project were:

1. To improve the student's performance in reading and writing
2. To design, implement, and evaluate a program of holistic activities in reading and writing.
3. To observe children's progress and diagnose instructional needs
4. To design, or locate, appropriate reductionist activities to teach diagnosed needs when required.

Evaluation

1. Evaluation of Objective #1. To improve the student's performance in reading and writing.

In order to assess the effects of the project on children's performance in reading and writing, data were collected from three of the six participating classes - one sixth and two seventh grade classes. Pre-and post-tests were given in reading, writing, and spelling. Many examples of children's work were

systematically collected, and the teacher kept records of her conferences, observations, planned reading, and language activities.

The pre-tests were given in May and September 1978 or when a new child entered the class. The post-tests were given in May, 1979. The tests selected were those most suitable for administration by a class-room teacher and most relevant to the objectives of the project. It must be stressed that the teacher's task was to teach. The project was the normal professional responsibility of the classroom teacher. The decision to collect data to evaluate the project more thoroughly than would ordinarily be expected was an option the teacher chose to make. No special funds or resources were available for data collection or evaluation.

Reading was assessed at three different levels: passage comprehension, word-recognition, and phonic knowledge. Passage comprehension was assessed by the Portland Public Schools Achievement Level Tests in Reading and by an informal reading inventory using the Portland Informal Reading Inventory, and selected reading passages from the Pal Paperback Library. Word-recognition was assessed by the Slosson Oral Reading Test. Phonic knowledge was assessed by the Roswell-Chall Diagnostic Reading Test. The Slosson Oral Reading Test and the Roswell-Chall Diagnostic Reading Tests were administered and scored by a classroom aide. The Portland Public Schools Achievement Level Tests were administered by home-room teachers and scored by the Portland Public Schools Evaluation Department. The informal reading inventories were administered and scored by the classroom teacher.

Results of the reading tests were as follows:

Reading: Passage Comprehension

Portland Informal Reading Inventory

Individual Instructural Levels

Period 1			Period 2			Period 3		
Student	Sept	May	Student	Sept	May	Student	Sept	May
1	5.0	6.0	1	1.5	2.5	1	4.0	4.0
2	4.5	6.0	2	4.0	6.5	2	4.0	5.5
3	6.0	6.5	3	4.0	.5	3	5.0	5.5
4	4.5	5.0	4	5.5	6.5	4	3.5	4.0
5	2.5	3.5	5	4.0	4.5	5	2.5	2.5
6	5.0	6.5				6	5.0	6.0
7	4.0	3.5				7	3.0	3.5
						8	2.5	2.5
						9	4.0	4.5

Instructional levels were determined by finding the highest level at which a student could read a complete, selected, graded reading passage orally and earn a score of 75% on retelling and answering questions about the passage. Of the 21 students tested, one performed half a year less well in May than in September, three remained the same, eight made gains of approximately half a year, five made gains of one year, and four made gains of one and a half years. Though an informal reading inventory is a gross measure of reading performance, it is included here because the thoughtful retelling of stories and responding to questions is a holistic activity and a major goal of reading instruction encouraged by this project.

Portland Public Schools Achievement
Level Tests - Reading
P-Scores and RIT Scores of Individual Students

Period 1					Period 2					Period 3				
Student	May 78		May 79		Student	May 78		May 79		Student	May 78		May 79	
	PS	RIT	PS	RIT		PS	RIT	PS	RIT		PS	RIT	PS	RIT
1		199	38	196	1		179	-	-	1			34	185
2		198	41	201	2		201	45	207	2			42	198
3		198	47	210	3		196	49	213	3			48	207
4		-	-	197	4		208	44	206	4			-	-
5		196	46	208	5		-	18	163	5			41	197
6		199	47	210						6			40	195
7		188	40	199						7			35	187
										8			37	190
										9			55	218

PS or P-scores show how a student is performing in relation to all Portland students in his or her grade level. The P-score scale remains the same for all grade levels with a score of 50 being average. All of the children in this study had P-scores lower than 42 at the time of their entry into the project. At the end of the project P-scores were available for 18 of the 21 students who participated. 9 of these students had scores of 42 or higher. Pre-test scores were stored electronically and further details are not available.

The RIT score shows growth on an equal interval scale extending from 3rd grade level through 9th grade. RIT scores comparing student performance both before and after the project are available for only nine of the twelve seventh grade students in the project. At this level a gain of 5 RIT points is an average gain for a year. For the nine students for whom data are available, the average RIT score improved 7.5 points from an average of 198 to 205.5.

While incomplete, the available data nevertheless show that the students in the project made gains considerably greater during their year in the Title I project, than their average yearly growth rate in their previous years of schooling.

Reading: Word Recognition
Slosson Oral Reading Tests
Individual Instructional Levels

Period 1			Period 2			Period 3		
Student	Sept 78	May 79	Student	Sept 78	May 79	Student	Sept 78	May 7
1	5.5	6.9	1	6.3	7.9	1	4.8	5.6
2	5.1	6.2	2	4.0	5.7	2	4.2	5.2
3	4.7	5.8	3	2.4	3.1	3	4.3	5.5
4	5.1	6.0	4	4.0	4.9	4	2.5	2.9
5	5.0	6.0	5	4.7	6.4	5	5.1	6.8
6	6.9	7.6				6	6.4	7.8
7	3.2	4.0				7	2.7	3.5
						8	3.2	4.1
						9	3.9	5.7
Mean			Mean			Mean		
x	5.7	6.7	x	4.3	5.6	x	4.1	5.2

The Slosson Oral Reading Test is a series of graded word lists from pre-primer through high school. The score indicates an instructional level. The table shows that an average the two seventh grade classes made gains of 1.0 and 1.3 and the sixth grade class made a gain of 1.1 year over the eight month period from September to May. This compares to a rate of growth of .8 per year for the seventh grade classes and .9 per year for the sixth grade class over their previous six years of schooling.

Reading: Phonic Knowledge
Roswell-Chall Diagnostic Reading Tests
Sums of Scores Earned on Tests III, IV, and V

Period 1			Period 2			Period 3		
Student	Sept 78	May 79	Student	Sept 78	May 79	Student	Sept 78	May 79
1	23	28	1	7	12	1	23	28
2	23	25	2	25	30	2	22	28
3	-	28	3	24	27	3	23	28
4	28	27	4	28	29	4	25	27
5	17	23	5	18	22	5	19	21
6	-	26				6	28	29
7	19	22				7	11	18
						8	19	21
Mean*						9	-	27
x	22.0	25.0		20.4	24.0		21.25	25.0

*Mean: for those students for whom both pre- and pre-test scores are available.

Tests III, IV, and V of the Roswell-Chall Diagnostic Reading Test are criterion tests of words in isolation which test the application of knowledge of certain phonic elements and familiarity with the structure of multisylabic words. Test III contains 5 pairs of words e.g. pin-pine, testing the understanding of the effect of the final e in a cvce pattern. Test IV is a list of 12 words containing vowel pairs and vowels controlled by r to test the student's knowledge of the pronunciation of these phonic elements in a medial position. Test V is a list of 8 multisyllabic words to test the student's application of structural analysis and accent location. Mean scores for the two seventh grade classes were 22 and 20 in September and 25 and 24 in May. Mean scores for the sixth grade class were 21 in September and 25 in May. The seventh grade students were able to decode 3.5 and the sixth grade students 4.0 more of these words in May than in September.

Writing was assessed by an analytic score applied to samples of student's writing collected in September and in May, and by the St. Louis Diagnostic Spelling Test. The St. Louis Diagnostic Spelling Test, Level I, was administered and scored by the classroom teacher. The analytic scale is reproduced below and was applied as follows. Student's writing samples vary considerably from day to day in length, appearance, and quality. Each student's file was therefore scanned by the project consultant, and one writing sample was selected which was typical in length and appearance of the student's work at the beginning of the year, and another sample was selected which was typical of the student's work at the end of the year. In making these selections no attempt was made to examine the content of the work or the quality of the ideas expressed. Each paper was randomly assigned a number, and the student's name and date were removed. The papers were then rated by twelve members of a graduate class in Advanced Methods in Language Arts at Portland State University. Each paper was rated independently by two raters. The random number system gave the raters no clues as to whether a paper was a beginning-of-year or end-of-year sample, but allowed the papers to

be identified after the ratings had been made. Before making the ratings, the raters received one hour of training in the use of the analytic scales and made three practice ratings of similar writing samples. Correlations of the ratings given by the twelve raters to the third practice sample were computed so that an estimate of inter-rater reliability may be made. Correlations between three randomly selected pairs of raters, (1 and 5, 7 and 4, and 11 and 13) on the third practice sample were .46, .77, and .51.

The analytic scale was as follows:

EVALUATION OF WRITING SAMPLES

Summary Sheet

Writing Sample #_____
Date_____
Examiner_____

	Low				High
1. Content - Quality of Thought What did the child write about? Overall rating for originality, imagination, observation of detail, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Language Examples: Effective and varied choice of words. Use of figurative expressions etc.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Organization Sequence of thought. Orderliness.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Sentence Development Appropriate variety of sentence types and patterns. Variety within sentences.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Technical Skills Capitalization and punctuation.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Usage Use of Standard English expression, tense, agreement, word choice, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Spelling A. Correct spelling of familiar and regularly spelled words.	1	2	3	4	5
B. Correct spelling of unfamiliar and irregularly spelled words.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Handwriting Legibility and overall appearance	1	2	3	4	5

Results of the writing tests were as follows:

Writing: The Analytic Scales
Individual Total Scores - Average of Two Independent Ratings

Period 1			Period 2			Period 3		
Student	Sept 78	May 79	Student	Sept 78	May 79	Student	Sept 78	May 79
1	28	24	1	14	23	1	23.5	29
2	17.5	21	2	20	34	2	21	28
3	19	26	3	20.5	23	3	21	36
4	21	27	4	22.5	20	4	21	35
5	20.5	22.5	5	18	33.5	5	20	36
6	17.5	21.5				6	21.5	22
7	15.5	33				7	23	31
						8	16	28.5
						9	26	24
Mean Scores x	19.8	25.0		19.0	26.7		21.4	29.9

The moderate inter-rater correlations reported for the analytic scales limit the interpretations that can be made from the data. Nevertheless all three classes appear to have made clear improvements from September 78 to May 79.

The following table reports pre-and post-average class scores on each item on the analytic scale.

The Analytic Scales
Class Averages (Maximum Score 5.0)

	Period 1		Period 2		Period 3	
Criterion	Sept. 78	May 79	Sept. 78	May 79	Sept. 78	May 79
Content	2.0	2.6	1.5	2.8	2.8	3.3
Language	1.7	2.3	1.6	2.6	2.2	3.0
Organization	2.8	2.3	2.0	3.4	2.8	3.4
Sentence Dev.	1.9	2.2	1.4	2.3	1.8	2.4
Tech. Skills	1.6	2.8	2.1	2.6	1.6	3.1
Usage	2.3	3.1	2.5	2.7	2.3	3.4
Spelling						
Easy	3.0	3.6	2.6	3.8	2.3	4.1
Hard	2.3	3.5	2.5	3.4	2.7	3.8
Handwriting	2.4	2.6	2.8	3.1	2.9	3.4

To the extent that these data do in fact measure changes in performance, the technical skills of capitalization and punctuation and the spelling of both easy

and hard words appear to have made the greatest gains. Sentence development, though somewhat improved during the eight months of the project, began low and ended low in comparison with the other eight criteria assessed.

Spelling: St. Louis Diagnostic Spelling Test - Level 1
Individual Scores - Maximum Score 32

Period 1			Period 2			Period 3		
Student	Sept 78	May 79	Student	Sept 78	May 79	Student	Sept 78	May 79
1	24	29	1	6	16	1	28	32
2	29	29	2	28	28	2	31	32
3	29	31	3	22	29	3	21	27
4	21	26	4	31	31	4	29	32
5	19	22	5	17	21	5	19	17
6	19	22				6	30	29
7	20	20				7	20	28
						8	21	28
						9	25	31
Mean $\bar{x}$	23	25.6		20.8	25.0		24.9	28.4

The St. Louis Diagnostic Speiling Test, List 1, is a list of 32 words testing students' knowledge of the spelling of a number of letter-sound relationships. The scores indicate that many of the students were already familiar with most of the relationships at the beginning of the year. It was not a particularly appropriate choice of test. Nevertheless all classes made some improvements and students who scored below 25 on the pre-test, increased their scores by an average of just over 5, indicating that they learned an average of just over 5 of the letter sound relationships during the year.

Taken as a whole the data suggest comprehensive gains in reading, writing, and spelling, for all three classes during the year. Where grade level equivalents are available, it can be said that the rate of gain was clearly greater for these three classes than their average rate of gain had been in their previous years of schooling.

2. Evaluation of Objective #2. To design, implement, and evaluate a program of holistic activities in reading and writing.

The following activities provided a varied and balanced holistic program in reading and writing: diary writing, individialized independent reading, the maintenance of a daily reading record, the production of ways of sharing books, the making and writing of a hand-sewn book, and the stories chosen for listening comprehension.

The students accepted their responsibilities well. At times some students were slow to begin work after first entering the classroom, and written work on the diaries and the daily reading record was often hurried, inaccurate, and of poor general appearance. Nevertheless work was initiated and completed with few reminders by the teacher, and on most days in most classes students could be seen giving sustained attention to their reading or their written work. Participation in discussion was often labored and sluggish and the content and language of the written work rarely rose above the mundane. Neither ideas nor fluency of oral expression came easily for these children. While students developed ways of sharing books and showing their understanding of what they had read, their ways of sharing were rarely imaginative. The most successful activity for sustaining children's attention was the making of their own hand-made, hand-sewn books. During the bookcraft project, the students' attention was often riveted on the task whether it was the writing, the proofreading, the recopying, the illustrating, or the physical production of the book itself.

3. Evaluation of Objective #3. To observe children's progress and to diagnose instructional needs.

By daily inspection of children's diary writing and individualized reading conferences at approximately weekly intervals, the teacher was able to

diagnose children's reading comprehension and their word-recognition strategies because she had internalized the checklists used for these purposes in the administration of an informal reading inventory. She was able to diagnose major spelling needs and to arrange instructional priorities. Without any firsthand experience of the analytic scales used to evaluate writing or any knowledge of what they contained, the teacher found it difficult to diagnose major needs in written composition and to prioritize instruction.

The diagnostic information from the Roswell-Chall Diagnostic Reading Test and the St. Louis Diagnostic Spelling Test was not used by the teacher to plan instruction in the traditional manner. It was collected in order to measure student's progress on subskills. A major objective of the program was to determine whether or not adequate diagnostic information could be obtained by observation of students' performance of holistic activities. It appears that the diagnostic information presented by diagnostic tests is different from that provided by the observation of holistic tasks. Children's progress during the year suggests that the diagnosis of holistic activities was at least adequate. The experience of the teacher suggests that valid diagnostic information from holistic activity can be obtained, recorded, and used for instruction when the teacher has been trained in observational techniques relating to the processes the children are using and the goals of the activity.

As the project developed and deficiencies in oral language skills became apparent, the teacher and consultant agreed that they needed a more comprehensive theoretical framework for diagnosing children's oral language strategies, reasoning, vocabulary, and listening skills.

4. Evaluation of Objective #4: To design or locate appropriate reductionist activities to teach diagnosed needs when required.

Following the teacher observations, the language lessons, which for the most part used actual examples of students' work, appeared to be manageable and quite appropriate for the development and application of many of the writing skills. Better diagnosis as a result of training and experience might have resulted in better choices of topics for instruction. The comparatively low scores in sentence development suggest that more lessons using sentence expansion and sentence combining might have been planned.

The students made sufficient gains in reading comprehension, in word-recognition and in phonic knowledge to suggest that the reading activities which for the most part made very little use of any kind of reductionist activity were quite adequate. It is likely that the nature of the spelling activities, may have helped students acquire word recognition strategies and phonic knowledge.

An examination of the Roswell-Chall Diagnostic Reading Test and the St. Louis Diagnostic Spelling Test shows that while general progress was made, students' scores on selected items did not measurably improve. Rather than indicating an omission in the project, this observation may more likely indicate that the skills in question were not encountered with sufficient frequency to be observed as an instructional need.

IV. Summary, and Recommendations

A program consisting mainly of diary-writing, with periodic proofreading and rewriting, individualized independent reading, and some listening comprehension activities was planned and implemented with six small classes of low-achieving sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in a Title I Reading and Writing Project at Mt. Tabor School.

A routine was set up which established clear responsibilities for students and allowed them some initiative, imagination, and choice in carrying them out.

Continuous daily evaluation of student's writing and spelling and weekly diagnostic reading conferences allowed the teacher to observe children's progress, diagnose needs, and plan instruction. Language lessons making use for the most part of examples drawn directly from student's work were taught to individuals and small groups almost daily. Results from achievement and diagnostic tests from three of the six classes indicated all-round improvement in all aspects of reading, writing, and spelling. On those tests which indicated a grade level, students improved at a rate better than that of their previous years of schooling. The classroom teacher found the program to be comprehensive and manageable. The students were attentive and cooperative and understood what they were being asked to do. There was some casualness in entering the room and beginning work, some trivial conversation, some emotional altercations from time to time, and some occasional time wasting; but, for the most part, students completed their work well and at times showed deep interest and sustained attention without recourse to any kind of extrinsic reward system.

In recent years many programs for Title I students have used commercially prepared diagnostic tests to ascertain student's needs and have prescribed large amounts of practice on commercially produced subskill exercises. While proponents claim that the focus upon specific skills is beneficial, critics of these programs have suggested that the excessive fragmentation possibly gives children distorted and unrealistic conceptualizations of reading and writing and has provided few opportunities for the application of skills to meaningful reading and writing tasks. By contra t, this program prescribed holistic reading and writing tasks at the outset. It depended upon systematic and continuous observation of children's performance by the teacher, and the prescription of comparatively small amounts of subskill practice. The practice examples were teacher made and were taken directly and almost exclusively from the work of the children participating in

the program. While the study concerned the work of only one teacher, and while many other variables, particularly class size,certainly exerted their effects, the program provides an interesting and potentially exciting alternative to much current practice, and the results were sufficiently encouraging to warrant further extensive exploration and study.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for the improvement of programs of this kind:

1. Good books should be selected carefully and plenty of titles, more than were used in this project, should be made available.

2. The routine should be explained and taught to students in the first few days of the program. They should be encouraged to discuss their responsibilities, and an effort should be made to value time and cut down on the time wasting, especially at the beginning of each day.

3. The students should be systematically shown a variety of ways to share their books.

4. The students from the beginning should be encouraged to take more pride in the appearance of their daily reading records.

5. The teacher should be given an evaluation checklist to assist in diagnosing student needs in written work.

6. More use should be made of class books, and bulletin boards, to create purposes for proofreading and rewriting at the beginning of the year.

7. Some instructional units or activity cards should be prepared for individualized work on some of the more commonly encountered instructional needs, especially in writing.

8. More time should be given to reading aloud and to listening comprehension. Suitable passages should be collected for present and future use.

9. Some lessons in sentence expansion and sentence combining should be included and their effect on student's written sentence construction observed.

10. The teacher should be given an oral language and listening skills check-list to assist in evaluating children's listening and oral language skills, and more attention should be paid to oral reasoning and discussion skills.

11. More systematic efforts should be made to extend student's vocabulary.

12. Some sets of books, i.e. half a dozen copies of the same title, should be included in the book selection so that children may read books in small study groups, if they so choose.

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